

What you should know about the 2012 transit system budget

A resource from the Columbia Missourian

Proposed service cuts and fare increases for the Columbia Transit system have been the most debated aspect of the city's proposed budget for fiscal 2012. Here's a look at some of the facts that frame the debate. *(Prepared for the 9/19/11 City Council meeting)*

What service reductions were originally proposed?

- Dropping miles from the 209 Black, 104 Southeast and the 207 West Gold routes
- Eliminating the MU football shuttle
- Eliminating each route's last bus trip on Saturdays
- Eliminate all service on Thursday and Friday evenings

What changes in fares were originally proposed?

- Increasing regular fares from \$1 to \$1.50 per ride
- Increasing the price of a 30-day pass from \$35 to \$55
- Increasing the price of a 25-ride pass from \$20 to \$30
- Increasing the cost of a semester pass for students from \$60 to \$100
- Increasing the cost of a paratransit ride from \$2 to \$3
- Eliminating half-fare eligibility to all groups except those mandated by federal law, which are the elderly, those on Medicare or people with disabilities. Half fares would rise from 50 cents to 75 cents.

Where do those proposals stand now?

- Thursday and Friday evening service would be cut by only one hour, ending it at 9:30 p.m.
- There would be no cuts to Saturday evening service.
- Only students older than 18 would lose eligibility for half fares.
- The MU football shuttle would continue with funding from the Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- All proposed fare increases are still being considered.

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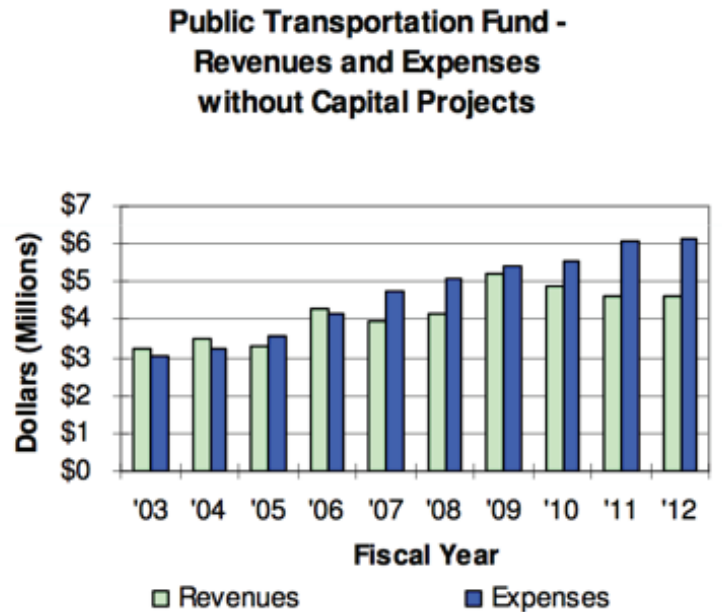
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Increasing expenses, decreasing revenue

In the graphic at right, provided by the city, one can see expenses slowly rising while revenue slowly declines. One explanation for this is increased ridership. The Gold Route, for example, has seen an increase of 738 percent since 2007 and now runs nine buses compared to two in 2007.

Another explanation is bus contracts between the city and some apartment complexes that give student residents free rides.

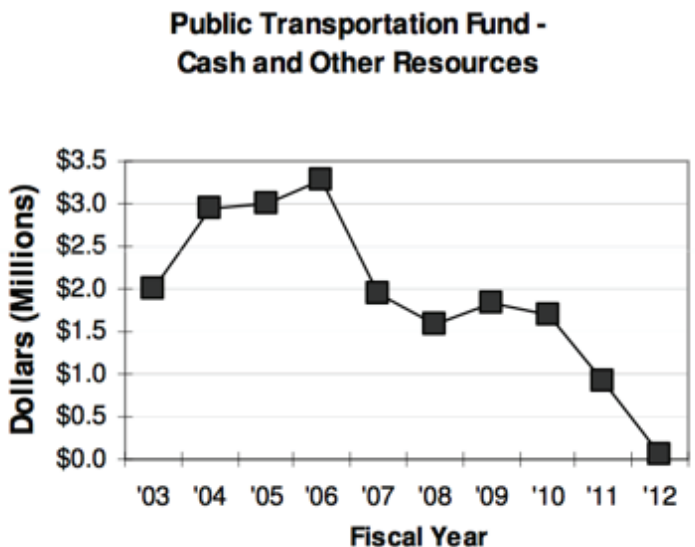
The contracts cover less than 20 percent of the expenses on these routes. City staff told the council that, while every ride the transit system provides costs an average of \$2.79, each ride on the Black and Gold routes brings in just 16 cents.



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Why are the changes being made?

The public transportation fund has been greatly depleted in recent years and is about to run out of money. If the City Council makes no changes, the fund will hit \$0 in July. The proposed changes are designed to keep the fund intact through the upcoming fiscal year until a long-term solution can be found.



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